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 she performs 11/9

LN# OUTPUT TEXT

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 3 By JOE SALTZMAN  
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 6 Anyone who wants to stay on the good side of harpist  
 7 Nancy Allen had better not say anything about heaven or angels or wings.  
 8 That's guaranteed to turn this mild-mannered, 105-  
 9 pound musician into a woman of steel.  
 10 "People always are coming up to me and saying  
 11 something about heaven and harps and angels," she said  
 12 with a weariness that results from hearing more than  
 13 two decades of angel talk. "And they always say it as if  
 14 they were the first ones to think of it. It gets very tiring,  
 15 very quickly."  
 16 It's also good advice not to mess with her sisters,  
 17 either, because Barbara Allen and Jane Allen also are harpists and  
 18 also have heard the same jokes all their lives. So has  
 19 their mother, Mary.  
 20 "We all got tired of jokes about the three little angels'  
 21 when we were very young," Allen said. "My mother  
 22 would finally say, 'I'm sure when they go to heaven,  
 23 they'll be harp movers, not harp players.' That usually  
 24 changed the subject."  
 25 Nancy Allen, who will play the harp with flutist  
 26 Ransom Wilson in a duo concert at 8 p.m. Tuesday (11/9) at El Camino College, is 28. She and

*File*

*unpublished*



27 her sisters have been playing the harp since they were old enough to reach it (about 6).  
28 Barbara, 26, played harp for the San Francisco Symphony and now freelances in New York.  
Jane,

29 30, is in Oregon where she plays in the Eugene Symphony.

30 The three girls, growing up in Putnam County north of New  
31 York City, played in churches and small recitals. "I guess it  
32 was unique: the three of us playing our own harps," she  
33 remembered. "I began on a larger instrument when I couldn't  
34 even reach the pedals. I had to sit on telephone books."

35 Their father, Don, was a medical photographer who  
36 played the drums as a hobby and took great pride in his  
37 three harpists.

38 "I remember my father carrying all three  
39 harps up long staircases and into the church complain-  
40 ing but loving every minute of it," she said. "I remember  
41 when he first realized he wasn't carrying my harp  
42 anymore. It meant I was growing up. It was a shocking  
43 realization."

44 A harp has 47 strings and the joke among harpists is  
45 "you spend half your life tuning the instrument and the  
46 other half playing it out of tune." Don Allen used to help his three daughters tune their  
47 harps. He would stand at the piano and play a C and then his three little girls would take  
48 their harps and all tune their C-strings.

49 Allen made her professional debut at 14. In 1972, she entered the Juilliard School on a  
50 scholarship, eventually studying with two famous harpists of  
51 the 20th Century  
52 --Marcel Grandjany and Lily Laskine. In 1975, she made her Carnegie Recital Hall (cq) debut  
in  
53 New York, became the second harpist for the New York Philharmonic, and now performs  
throughout  
54 the world.

55 For her first solo recording, "A Celebration for Harp:  
56 Three Centuries of Music by Scarlatti, Bach, Loeillet,  
57 Respighi, Prokofiev and others," an Angel digital record, she  
58 and producer Patti Laursen worried about the music sounding  
59 "dangerously the same" since the harp repertory is so  
60 limited. So Allen read through more than 150 Scarlatti  
61 sonatas to find those best adapted to the harp.

62 For her new Angel release in January, she recorded music of



63 Debussy and Ravel and brought together such supporting artists  
64 as Gerard Schwarz and the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, the  
65 Tokyo String Quartet, clarinetist David Shifrin and flutist  
66 Wilson. Included will be her transcription of Debussy's  
67 "Suite Bergamasque," which includes the famous "Clair de  
68 lune." That also will be one of her solos in Tuesday's  
69 concert with Wilson. Wilson and Allen have made two albums  
70 together for Angel.

71 A harp weighs about 85 pounds but in its massive case  
72 it weighs 230 pounds. When you weigh less than half  
73 that, it's not an easy matter to move the harp around the  
74 world for concerts.

75 "It's a burden. I'm used to it, but it is a pain to carry  
76 around. Since I'm rather petite, when people see me  
77 alone they always try to help me. Sometimes it's harder  
78 that way. They try to pick the harp up when I'm  
79 carrying it on a dolly, not realizing they're taking it off  
80 the dolly and making it much more difficult for me.

81 "After a while, they inevitably suggest that I should  
82 start playing the piccolo instead."

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